*The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground.* —THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1788

# July 2019: Ukraine launched probe of military sale by fundraiser for Adam Schiff

By **J.E. Dyer** **September 30, 2019**

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*Igor Pasternak (L), Adam Schiff. Pasternak: Capitol Intelligence Ukraine video, YouTube*

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On Sunday 29 September, a theme was going viral on social media that a Ukrainian-American arms merchant, Igor Pasternak, **has held fundraising events for Rep. Adam Schiff** (D-CA). Some other allegations about Pasternak – e.g., that he is closely tied to George Soros – don't seem to have a paper trail that could be verified with online research. But the report that Pasternak has done fundraising for Schiff is documented.

Although the widely-cited 2013 fundraiser was in Washington, D.C., Igor Pasternak's company headquarters is in Montebello, California, on the east side of Los Angeles. It's near Schiff's CA-28 congressional district,

Aeros makes lighter-than-air (LTA) airships via its Aeroscraft arm. That is its signature niche in the general aviation industry as well as its entrée to defense contracting. Aeros has had contracts with the U.S. Defense Department to develop **surveillance airships** and **cargo-delivery airships**. Pasternak, an engineer by training, has had a lifelong interest in what can be done with LTA vehicles.

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fundraiser, Pasternak was already giving aid and comfort to Adam Schiff.

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In the Ukrainian political sorting after the invasion and partitioning of Crimea, one of the major developments in Kyiv **has been reorganizing** the government-directed defense industry conglomerate, known by its acronym **Ukroboronprom**. Ukroboronprom coordinates the arms industry in Ukraine, in the same manner as similar entities in Russia, China, and a number of other countries. Its centralized nature and arms portfolio mean it is always **rife with corruption**, but at the moment, the point is simply to introduce it to the reader.

In the course of establishing project-worthy contacts in Ukraine, Pasternak's Aeroscraft had a couple of scores that, from the Aeros perspective, were big ones. One is a joint project with an Ukroboronprom subsidiary industry group, Ukroboronservis, to produce a Ukrainian version of the M4 used by the U.S. armed forces (**here** and **here**). That project is eye-catching because it involves producing rifles – not something Aeros has had a background in.

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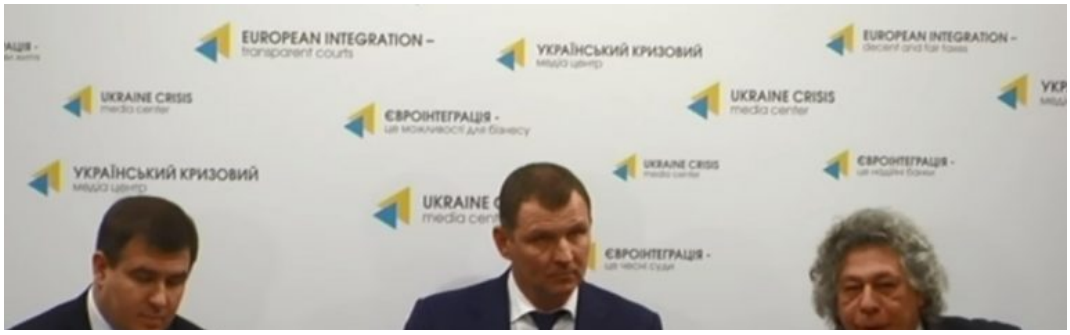
Perhaps it's just a new tack for Aeros, into which Pasternak is putting zeal, energy, and investment dollars. But it's easy to imagine there were at least half a dozen other U.S. companies it would have made more sense to build NATO-ready rifles with. (I've been unable to determine if Aeros simply subcontracted with one of them, and functioned chiefly as a go-between because of Pasternak's Ukrainian background.)

The second project was right up Aeros's alley, however. It involved designing and installing an **aerial surveillance infrastructure** for a section of the Ukrainian border, in conjunction with another Ukroboronprom enterprise, SpetsTechnoExport. Aeros had been working on such a project (link above) using aerostats, for the U.S. DOD. The network installed in Ukraine ended up being **mounted on towers in Mariupol**, overlooking the Sea of Azov, rather than being deployed in an aerostat flotilla. Petro Poroshenko, then president of Ukraine, was there for the inauguration ceremony **of this border surveillance system in January 2017**.

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*Igor Pasternak (R) at Ukroboronprom media event for inauguration of the border early warning and surveillance system installed for Ukraine by Aeros. Jan 2017. YouTube video*

Fast-forward to July 2019, however, and the happy-face buzz about the border surveillance system wasn't quite so happy anymore. Some noteworthy developments occurred in the meantime, one of the most significant being a commitment by Ukraine to have corruption-ridden Ukroboronprom audited by an independent, outside firm; in particular, one of the global "Big Four" in which foreign investors would most readily put their trust (Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Ernst & Young (EY), KPMG).

On 2 July 2019, the **Kyiv Post reported** that in spite of the change of government with the 2019 elections (which brought Volodymyr Zelensky in to replace Poroshenko), and many months of preparatory work, both

I ask you to remember that date: 2 July. We'll need it again for reference shortly.

Then, on 22 July 2019, Ukrainian media reported that the procurator for military investigations in the Ukrainian prosecutor-general's office was **probing the purchase** by Ukraine of the Aeros border surveillance system. Adam Schiff's sometime fundraiser found one of his two big

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Aeros).

It seems doubtful that President Trump knew about this relatively obscure development when he had his 25 July phone call with President Zelensky. But it's a strong bet that a lot of Democrats in the U.S. knew (such as political activist Alexandra Chalupa and her Ukraine-embedded network, which was so **active in seeking dirt on Trump** during the 2016 campaign). As the link above indicates, Igor Pasternak had already **posted a statement** about the investigation at the Aeros company website (the date of the statement is 24 July).

Without judging the merits of the case one way or another – not even possible from outside the circle of facts and evidence – we can nevertheless suppose that this is a sensitive matter for Americans heavily invested in links with Ukraine. It would color how such persons saw any push from the president, especially a president from the opposing political party, for more robust investigations by Ukraine. It would be a reason to dislike or even fear such investigations.

It could be a reason for the paranoid to assume the investigations were meant to damage their interests. It would have been on the minds of at least some Democrats when the "whistleblower" complaint was forwarded to Adam Schiff in the 12 August 2019 letter. And, of course, if some of them already knew the complaint was coming before that date, they had that information *and* the knowledge of the Aeros transaction probe in

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straight. They're being obfuscated with reporting that seesaws between slovenly and tendentious, and I want to take a moment here for a reset.

The place to start is with the allusion to Javelin antitank missiles made by Zelensky in **the 25 July phone call**. And the key point – a reference point for organizing our thinking about the whole matter – is that **the sale of Javelins is not military aid to Ukraine**.

I don't recall ever seeing quite so much of a to-do made over one battlefield system as has been made over Javelin missiles in the last week. The Javelins have been discussed repeatedly as if they are (a) part of the military aid package for Ukraine, and (b) the key to Ukraine's survival, a weapon system of such occult indispensability that it would be unconscionable for the president to discuss it at all as if it were an unsavory *political* matter between heads of government.

*First Javelin antitank missile launch in Ukraine, 2018. News from Ukraine video*

The silliness of the latter proposition – point (b) – ought to go without saying. But it has been a long time since people's ears were attuned to the real sound of bilateral state-to-state relations. The media and the public have been conditioned to listen for the mode of a benevolent superpotent United States dispensing favors, rather than the age-old give

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the sound of Joe Biden's account of getting the Ukrainian prosecutor fired – **wherever it may have taken place** – which is, precisely, that of a mob extortion).

But since the inauguration of the UN, in the long period of the Pax Americana after 1945, we have lost touch with the simple normality of the sound of friendly bargaining. The U.S. doesn't give things away without strings or reciprocity in state relations. We don't expect other nations to either. The sound of bargaining has been heard every day since 1945, in our negotiations for hundreds of state-to-state agreements around the world, even if it hasn't been heard by the average American.

In the same interim, however, Americans have been taught to believe that with UN-oriented internationalism, global relations shifted to a more elevated plane where the virtuous don't bargain, but instead proclaim lofty principles and assume attitudes, as if pragmatic national interests simply tend themselves.

Presidents like Reagan, Nixon, and Truman were actually tough, interest-tending bargainers, with friends as well as foreign adversaries. That's why each of them put such a stamp on geopolitics and international relations. Far from being unthinkable, it's not even unusual for a chat between heads of government to have the penumbras of incentive and reciprocity hanging over it.

It's point (a), however, that we can nail down with the simple persuasion of

weapons and supplies in each of 2019 and 2020, and I discussed it **here** last week.

But the Javelins aren't military aid. We aren't giving them to Ukraine; Ukraine is buying them. There is **a foreign military sales (FMS) case** for them, which was approved in March 2018, and which yielded an initial delivery **in late April 2018**.

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defense" – although he immediately continued with the single specific point about buying Javelins.)

There's a good reason why the Javelins in particular would have been on Trump's mind, as well as Zelensky's. On 7 July, **the new U.S. Chargé d'Affaires** in Ukraine, William Taylor, **told the media** that Ukraine, under Zelensky's leadership only since 20 May 2019, had just made its first major request for an arms purchase from the United States. (Taylor was sent to assume the position of Chargé in June 2019, after the former ambassador, Marie Yovanovitch, appointed by Obama in 2016, was recalled in May 2019.)

The best-known item in that July arms request, as **confirmed by reporting** about a month later on 9 August 2019, was the tranche of additional Javelins Kyiv would like to buy, above and beyond the initial purchase agreed to in 2018.

For completeness, note that in July 2018, a **Javelin production agreement** was signed by DOD and the Raytheon-Lockheed Javelin partnership that would support future sales to foreign clients including Ukraine. The issue has been an active one in the Trump administration.

Now we have every data point we need to understand why there were good reasons, unrelated to the Ukrainian investigations Trump mentioned in the phone call, why the Trump administration might put a hold on the

The two big ones are the information that Ukraine had failed to even begin the promised independent audit of Ukroboronprom (deploy your bookmarked 2 July reference date here), and that Ukraine, under a new president, had made a major arms purchase request, the first of its kind (and a significant issue for review because of the plan to make Ukraine interoperable with NATO forces).

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together. Add in the policy factors of the NATO compatibility push and Ukraine's unresolved corruption problem in the defense industry – and add in the "X" factor of the leadership change at the embassy, certifying all these matters with a fresh look – and there's a stack of good reasons at work.

*Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and President Trump, Sep 2018. PBS News video*

Keep in mind, the public doesn't know what all was on Ukraine's wish list for the arms purchase request Chargé Taylor spoke of in July. You don't have to favor Russia, and you certainly don't have to trust Russia any further than you could throw Vladimir Putin, to want to do a full review of the arms the U.S. is flowing to Ukraine. Such a review would be

situation, and the interests of the U.S. and NATO vis-à-vis the expected concerns of Russia. Far from being evidence of suspicious bias, holding such a review would be basic statecraft.

That's something plenty of pundits would have been able to articulate as little as 25 years ago. They would have known they should be looking for it; they would have recognized the signs in readily available media reports.

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atmospheric realities. That seems to make it easier for narrative-spinners in the mainstream media to take over the public dialogue with garbled tales of Javelins, treason, and plot.

It remains to be discovered what it means in all of this, that a fundraiser for a top House Democrat found his company's arms sale to Ukraine under investigation there in July 2019. For that, pointed questioning under oath may be required. But it's not Mr. Pasternak who needs to be questioned.

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Interesting. It'll be more interesting to see if any if this ever comes to light for the general public. I try hard to be independent but Democrat antics of late are making that very difficult.

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up winning this. --jg

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**Robert Jacoby** ★ Leader · 30 Sep

Thanks for the sober analysis, JE.

Shouldn't any new president review all military aid packages and purchase requests, as circumstances change and a new president

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